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ABSTRACT

Preschool teachers need to acquire more realistic expectations and definitions of their jobs and need to learn how to observe their own behaviors. Members of the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory have observed that preschool teachers offer rewards for learning that are extrinsic to the learning process (e.g., rewarding a reading lesson with playtime), that they suffer from "right answer syndrome," and that they offer global praises such as "good boy" rather than specific praise. The teacher training program at the Laboratory stresses positive attitudes toward learning: Children should be motivated to learn for the joy of learning, teachers should praise children's learning efforts in specific terms, and "wrong" answers should be interpreted as providing a direction for remediation. The training program uses filmed models of teaching, simulation, and microteaching. (LP)

THE ROLE OF TEACHER EXPECTATIONS [1]

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THE ROLE OF TEACHER EXPECTATIONS

The general position taken in this paper is that we cannot simply extrapolate from theory and arrive at universal principles for classroom reinforcement, because theory and practice must be bridged by teachers with conflicting attitudes and expectations. It is argued that if teachers are to reinforce effectively, their attitudes and expectations must be congruent with those assumed by the program.

Theoretically, I am largely in agreement with Moore (Moore and Anderson, 1968), Montessori (1964), and others who hold that learning is intrinsically rewarding and should require no external reinforcement from adults. However, as Moore himself has found (Pines, 1967), reinforcement is unavoidable in teacher-child interaction. Even if teachers try to avoid deliberate or overt reinforcement, their evaluative reactions are conveyed through minimal cues of tone and gesture. Children pick up these cues and experience teacher approval and disapproval. This is especially true of preschoolers, who are so attentive towards and dependent upon their teachers. Thus the question, "Should there be reinforcement in the preschool?" is a purely theoretical one. On the practical level we must ask, "What should be reinforced, and what kinds of reinforcement should be used?"

My general answer to these questions is that teachers should behave in ways that will foster the development of intrinsic motivation to learn in children who have not already developed it, and to reinforce it in those who have. By "intrinsic motivation to learn," I mean valuing school learning activities for their own sake, so that acquiring and

practicing skills is enjoyed and experienced as rewarding, even when not backed by reinforcement from the teacher. To help foster this type of motivation, teachers should concentrate rewards on the children's efforts to reach goals, with emphasis on each child's progress relative to where he started (process) rather than on his performance relative to other children (product). Whenever concrete rewards are given for specific behavior, verbal specification of what is being rewarded is necessary if the child is to clearly understand the intended meaning. Without this specification, preschool children are likely to perceive rewards as resulting from compliance with the teacher's authority rather than from learning efforts.

Even with appropriate specification, however, reward remains only one part of a much larger picture. Discrete rewards can sometimes provide powerful reinforcement, but the child's tremendous capacities to learn through verbal instruction and through modeling and imitation provide more direct ways to instill motivation. Teachers can express attitudes and values directly, and can model them in their classroom behavior.

However, observations by ourselves and others suggest that preschool teachers typically do not project positive attitudes toward learning. Implicitly, and sometimes even explicitly, lessons are presented as undesirable tasks foisted on the children by outside authority ("This is something we have to do."). In introducing lessons, teachers often jump right into the content instead of providing some advance organizers to create interest and prepare the children to attend and learn. When attempts to motivate do occur, they often have

a negative tone ("You have to be very quiet and listen carefully if you are going to learn this."). After lessons, instead of simply ending, or perhaps making a comment to reinforce the value of the lesson, teachers often say something like "My, you all listened carefully today; you were so good that I'm going to let you go out and play now." Statements like these all carry the same message: there is nothing intrinsically worthwhile about learning - it's something you do to please the teacher so you can get extrinsic rewards.

Except for the low frequency of physical punishment and for the use of more complex language structures, the classroom behavior of some teachers, especially in lower class schools (Becker, 1952; Brophy and Good, 1971), is reminiscent of the socialization techniques seen in lower class homes (Hess, Shipman, Brophy, and Bear, 1969). That is, performance demands tend to be presented and enforced with relatively little justification or explanation. Compliance with the teacher's authority, rather than personal development or skill mastery, becomes the major force guiding the children's behavior. Criticism and punishment are more frequent than praise and rewards, and when praise does occur it often takes the form of global statements lacking specific content ("Good boy," "That's good.").

Fortunately, things need not be so. Teachers who act this way usually do so because they do not realize what they're doing. They are not acting deliberately and consciously, since they tend to be largely unaware of their own evaluative and reinforcing behavior. In one study, for example, ratings of teacher behavior made by pupils correlated with ratings made by classroom observers, but neither of these correlated

with teachers' own self-ratings (Ehman, 1970). This lack of teacher awareness apparently is because teaching is very complex and demanding, and the busy teacher simply doesn't have time to notice his own behavior while he is carrying it out (Jackson, 1968). In addition, it's especially hard for the preschool teacher to monitor his own behavior, because young children do not provide the kind of feedback that older pupils will. They are less likely to ask questions, make suggestions, point out inconsistencies, or otherwise help the teacher determine where they are in learning a concept. Also, they are much more likely to appear to understand what the teacher is saying even when they do not. This makes it quite easy for the teacher to slip into systematic behavior patterns without being aware of them.

In addition, teacher education and training usually is of little help in making the teacher aware of his own behavior. Often there is relatively little material about the actual process of teaching. Instead, there is information about children (usually sugar-coated and romanticized), description and examples of the curriculum (usually presented as if it worked automatically all by itself, without any special efforts from the teacher), and some very general platitudes about teaching (teach the whole child, individualize instruction, help each child reach his full potential, etc.).

Preparation of this sort does not equip the teacher to be very self-perceptive about his classroom behavior, and the unrealistic expectations created may make him defensive about objective observation. As a result, teachers give very similar answers (safe, global responses) when asked about their philosophies of teaching, even though their

classroom behavior differs markedly. This situation can persist indefinitely unless teachers are exposed to training which provides them with more realistic expectations and definitions of their job, with attention to teaching process that makes them more skilled in monitoring their own behavior, and with specific descriptions of teaching behaviors that they can practice and perfect.

One place to begin is to make very clear to teachers that their job involves learning management - presenting information, diagnosing difficulties, and providing remedial training until the child reaches the learning objectives. This may sound mundane, in that it corresponds to the common sense definition of the word "teaching," but observation in classrooms shows that many teachers do not teach in this sense. Instead they function as a sort of referee or critic. They present information, control the classroom, call on children to respond, and evaluate those responses, but they usually do not follow up with diagnosis and remediation.

To avoid those problems, preschool programs need to train teachers to produce the specific classroom behaviors that the curriculum calls for. Even good training won't be effective, however, unless the teachers involved can become ideationally or emotionally committed to the principles being taught. Teachers who believe in what they're doing tend to find ways to make it succeed, while those who do not believe in what they're doing tend to find ways to make it fail.

One of the major strengths of the behavior modification approach to the classroom is its emphasis on gaining the teacher's emotional commitment. Most trainers deliberately include an extinction phase early

in the treatment, which is for the benefit of the teacher rather than the children. The idea is to show the teacher that changes in the children's behavior correlate directly with his own behavior, and are therefore attributable to the treatment procedures. This and other experiences in the program not only show the teacher how to behave according to the Skinnerian principles involved; they also tend to commit him to the idea that the children's behavior is controlled by his own behavior, especially his reinforcing behavior. Despite its success in gaining teacher commitment, however, I would not accept behavior modification as the major approach to classroom instruction, except for teachers who genuinely believe that behavior is controlled solely by extrinsic reinforcements. These teachers will comfortably and effectively serve as behavior modifiers, and will also tend to resist attempts to get them to operate on the assumption that learning is intrinsically rewarding.

One reason for my attitude is obviously a value judgment or philosophical position - I believe that children can and should be shown that learning can be self-rewarding, and that they should be taught this rather than the idea that one does things only for external social or material rewards. I think that intrinsic motivation is learned and to some extent can be taught, but not by behavior modification.

I also have some practical or empirical objections to the behavior modification approach. A major one is that effective behavior modification is largely an individual treatment, requiring careful monitoring of the individual child's behavior and the ability to reinforce immediately and appropriately when opportunities arise. It is much more applicable

to individual treatment of a particular child than to use with a group. Also, it applies much more easily to overt physical actions, especially to eliminating misbehavior, than to the more covert and cognitive processes involved in thinking and problem solving. Thus while a teacher can learn relatively easily to use behavior modification principles for dealing with two or three problem children in his classroom, he cannot easily apply these principles in managing instruction for a classroom of twenty or twenty-five. Other difficulties with behavior modification on a classroom strategy are discussed in MacMillan and Forness (1970).

Our approach to teacher training at the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL) shares with the behavior modification approach an interest in gaining the commitment of the teachers involved and an emphasis on the classroom behavior that is to be taught. However, we de-emphasize rewards for discrete acts and instead stress the attempt to instill intrinsic motivation in the children. Rewards that are given are mostly social rather than material rewards. We try to get the teachers to specify what they are praising when they praise, and especially to praise process rather than product.

Since ours is a structured preschool program we stress that the teacher not only is expected to like and enjoy working with children, but also to teach them, to see that each child in the group meets at least the minimal behavioral objectives specified in the curriculum. Care is taken to see that the teachers understand that "teaching" means explaining, demonstrating, diagnosing learning difficulties, and providing remediation. Particular stress is placed on the need to

remediate with those who are having difficulties. Techniques are specified for seeing that the progress of each child is monitored and that remediation is provided when needed. Marion Blank's simplification and elaboration techniques are prominently drawn upon for this purpose (Blank, in press).

Much of this is part of an attempt to replace the "right answer syndrome," in which the teacher overvalues correct answers and gives most of her attention and reinforcement to those who provide correct answers, with a different set of attitudes and expectations. We try to get teachers to perceive themselves as instructional managers, and to behave accordingly. As opposed to valuing only correct answers, we stress the idea that any answer is important because it tells something about the child's present state of knowledge, and it gives direction for remediation efforts to bring him up to minimal acceptable standards.

We also train our teachers to introduce and end lessons properly, and in general to project positive attitudes toward structured activities. Instead of "Now we have to have our language lesson," we introduce lessons with statements like "Now it's time for our language lesson. We're going to learn some new words." Instead of ending the lesson with "You listened so well today that I'm going going to let you go and play now," we use statements like "We'll have to stop now, we're out of time. We'll learn some more new words tomorrow." Within the lesson itself, stress is placed on the need to monitor the individual responses of each child, and to provide information and practice for children who have not yet learned the concept or skill being taught.

Staff development activities are aimed both at instilling the appropriate attitudes and expectations in the teachers, and at training them to operationalize these through appropriate classroom behavior. For the latter purpose, we use methods similar to those involved in the micro-teaching and mini-course approaches to teacher training (Borg, Kelley, Langer, and Gall, 1970), in addition to the more typical expository material and videotapes. Teachers see videotaped demonstrations of appropriate teaching, and then role play in simulation exercises to get practice. Later they are taped during classroom teaching. They then study their own behavior, using criterion referenced check lists and coding systems, to get specific feedback on their strengths and weaknesses.

Even these procedures still require the teacher to transfer skills learned in training activities to every day classroom application. This can be difficult, even for bright and dedicated teachers. Consequently we try to minimize the problem by writing specific detail about lesson presentation directly into the curriculum booklets. Included in the procedure section for each lesson are opening and closing statements designed to foster positive attitudes toward the lesson, as well as praise statements designed to insure that teachers reward process rather than only product.

None of this is going to be very successful, of course, unless the teacher's genuine commitment to the attitudes and expectations we advance can be secured. We do not yet have a standard and proven program for obtaining teacher commitment the way the behavior modifiers do, but it is something we are working on. Difficulties are usually

encountered not so much with new teachers but instead with teachers who have some experience and a well developed set of attitudes. Some of these are teachers who have been trained in behavior modification, and who are sold on this approach. Such teachers, unless their attitudes can be changed, probably will be more effective using a behavior modification approach even within our program. The larger group however, are teachers who have been trained in the "traditional" nursery school model, with its emphasis on child guidance, social and emotional development, avoidance of structured curriculum and teaching, etc. Many such teachers have been convinced that a structured, curriculum based program cannot and will not work, that children will not enjoy such a program and will not be able to gain meaningfully from it. We find that teachers with these attitudes generally find a way to make the program not work for them, usually by consistently projecting their distaste for structured lessons in some of the ways mentioned previously. We need to find a way to change the attitudes of these teachers, or alternatively, to keep them out of the program, since as they are they cannot teach it successfully. Neither they nor the children in their classes tend to get out of it what other teachers and children do.

One final note: so far, the discussion has been confined to attitudes of the teachers. What about the attitudes of the children? In particular, what about children who not only do not enjoy learning interactions and structured lessons with teachers, but who already have a negative attitude towards such experiences? What about lower class children, who tend to be more responsive to material than social reinforcement (these data are discussed in Spence, 1970)? Would not

a program featuring material rewards and the general philosophy of behavior modification be more appropriate for such children?

In my opinion, the best strategy for even these children is to attempt to instill intrinsic motivation in them. Granted, there is a certain face validity appeal to the idea that you pitch towards someone's strength, or that you confine your activities to those that he expects or tends to prefer. This is the basic logic underlying the frequently heard statement that lower class children should be approached with material rewards (and, parenthetically, it is also the logic underlying aptitude x treatment interaction approaches and also Jensen's (1969) ideas regarding education of lower class children).

In evaluating a treatment, however, we should not ask what is familiar or preferred, but what is adaptive, especially in the long run.

Certain lower class children may enjoy eating paint chips and plaster, or may be highly responsive to physical punishment or abuse. We do not encourage <u>these</u> things, however, on the grounds that the children prefer them or expect them. Thus the argument that the extrinsic rewards approach is preferable with certain children simply because they presently are more responsive to such rewards must be rejected. It's logic implies that one method is not better or worse than another, that it really doesn't make any difference in the long run so long as the behavioral objectives of the curriculum are met. I do not believe this assumption is valid, at least not in our society as it is now constituted. Consequently, I think that an extrinsic rewards approach is not in the long run best interests of the children. The educational and occupational systems of our society operate on the

principle that people will be self-motivated to some degree. That is, they will tend to do more than the absolute minimum necessary to achieve minimum rewards or to avoid punishment. People who respond solely to external and material motivators do not tend to achieve the rewards available in society to the degree that people who are characterized by such things as achievement motivation, competence or mastery motivation, curiosity, or creativity do. They tend not to be the kind of people who get hired, admired, or promoted, or to be the generally successful types who get there largely because they make their own breaks.

Intrinsic motivation is not born but is clearly learned, although we do not know as much as we should about how to teach it systematically. I think programs ought to attempt to teach it, however, no mater how disadvantaged the target group or how different the motivational system of their subculture might be. If we do not do this, we will not equip a child to make it in our society to the degree that we could equip him. We may produce someone who can be successful in a factory assembly line that pays on a piece work basis, but not someone who could function effectively in school or in the majority of our occupations.

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